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THE

LAMBS

A

TRAGEDY

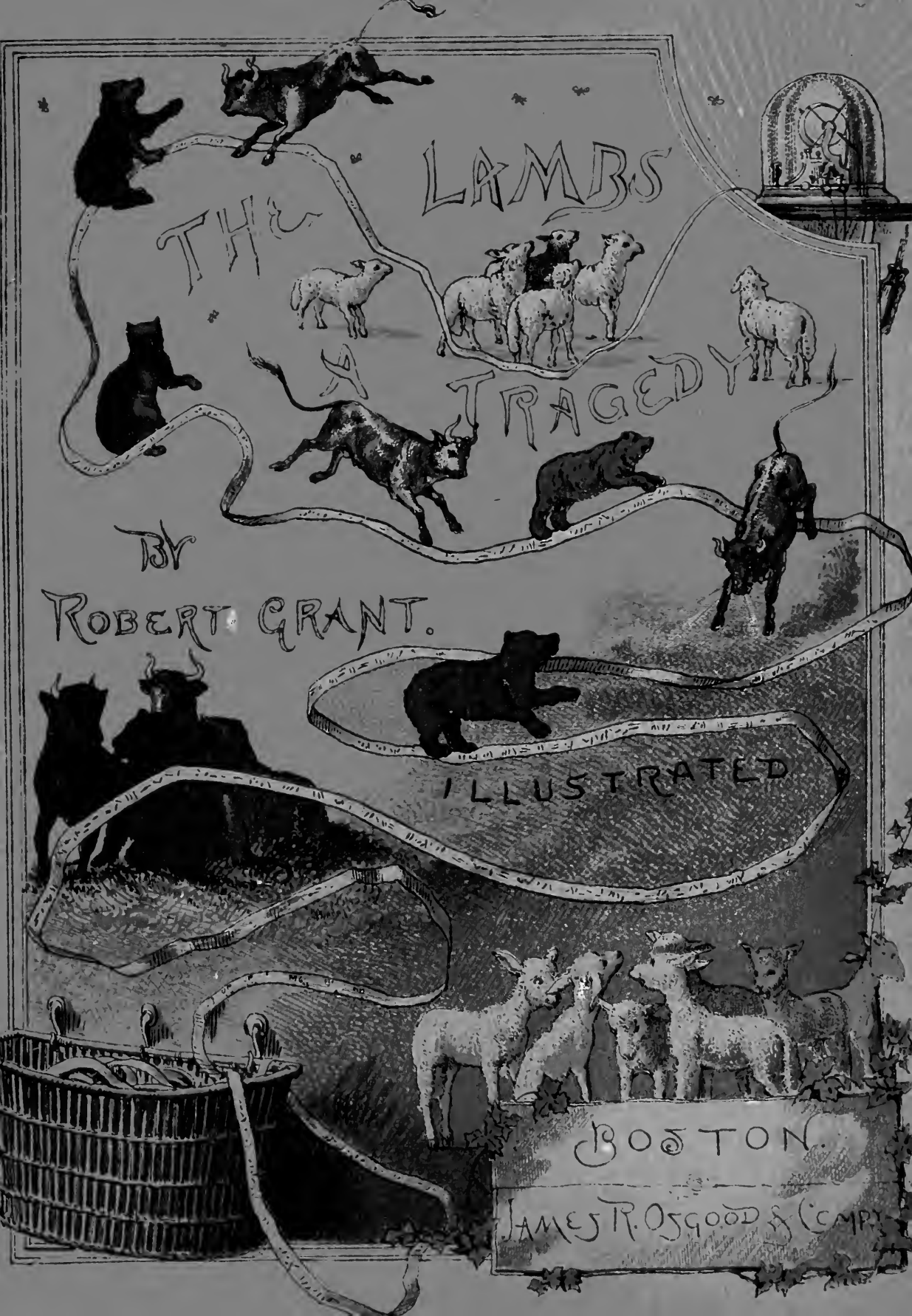
By

ROBERT GRANT.

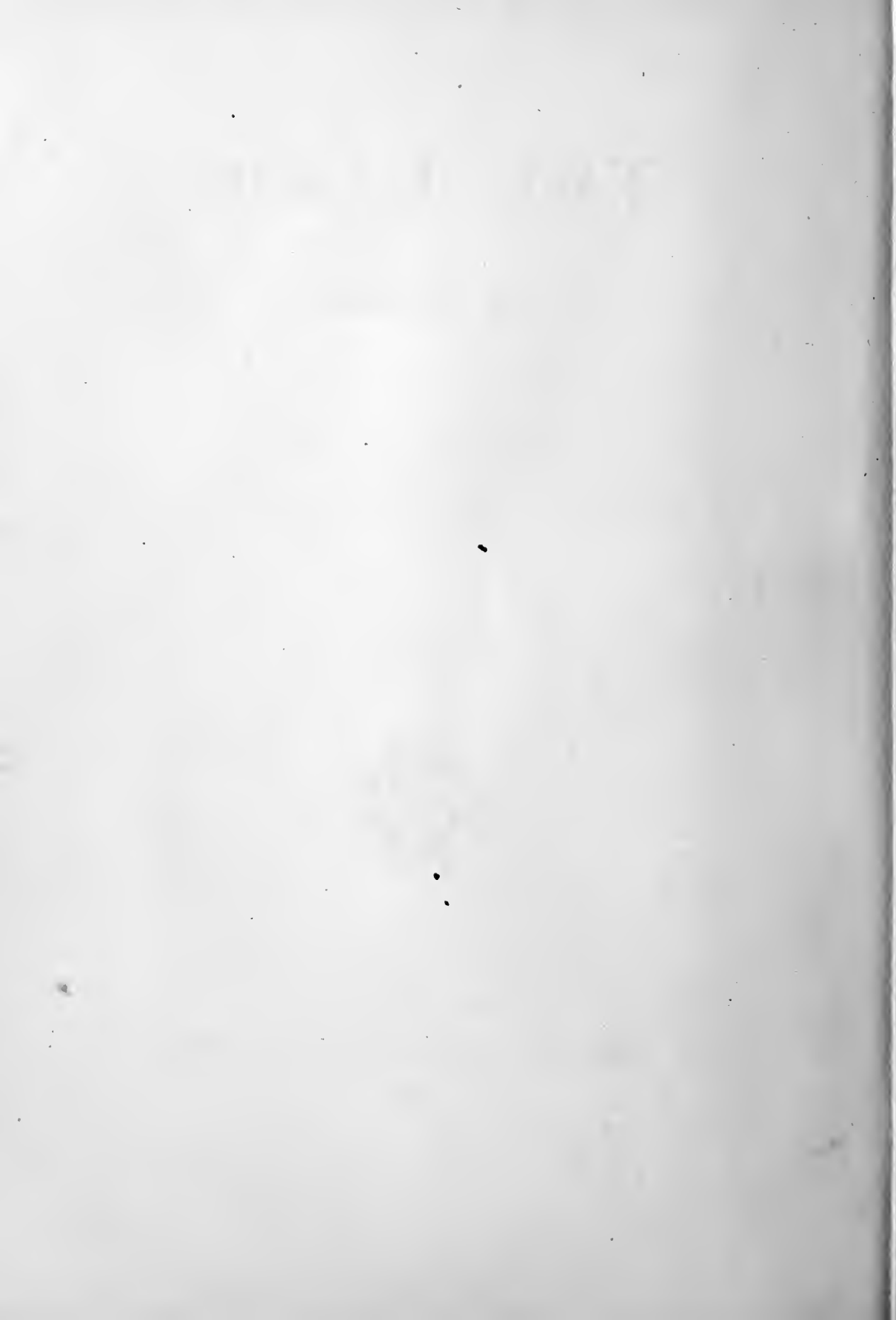
ILLUSTRATED

BOSTON.

JAMES R. OSGOOD & COMPANY



THE LAMBS



THE LAMBS

A Tragedy

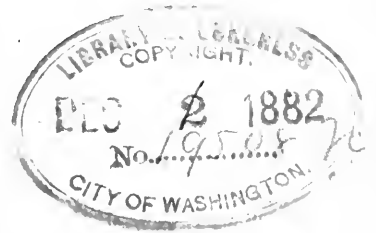
BY

ROBERT GRANT

AUTHOR OF

"CONFESSIONS OF A FRIVOLOUS GIRL," "THE LITTLE TIN GODS
ON WHEELS," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED



BOSTON

JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY

1883

(1883)

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Dramatis Personæ.

BRIGGS, *a broker* (Briggs, Brown, & Co.).

HOBBS, *clerk of Briggs.*

CULLY, *janitor of Briggs.*

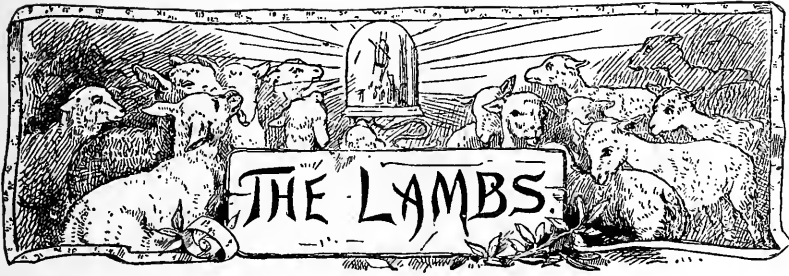
PHIPPS, *a customer.*

MIKE, *a telegraph boy.*

Choruses of Bulls, Bears, Shorn Lambs, etc.

[The scene of the tragedy is the outer office of Briggs, Brown, & Co., "Bankers and Brokers in Stocks, Bonds, and other Securities," Wall Street, New York. The rising of the curtain reveals the "ticker" in operation. The market has just opened. Upon the right and left of the stage, respectively, are arranged the choruses of bull and bear operators. In front, after the manner of the old Greek chorus, stand a group of speculators who have been sold out in former days, but still continue to shadow the tape as a chorus of shorn lambs. The office is handsomely furnished. The centre-table is strewn with a variety of journals relating to money matters, such as the "Wall Street Daily Truth," "The Financial Independent," "The Investor's Electric Light," etc. Cully, the janitor, who has just finished sweeping, stands in the foreground, broom in hand.]





CULLY.

I AM the Janitor of Briggs and Brown.
For many a day, year in, year out, have I
Guarded the threshold of this ancient firm
And earned my bread by sweeping. Time has scored
Deep furrows on this brow, and tinged these locks
That erst were brown, with silver. I have seen
Since first the boss engaged me as a boy
To run on errands and to fire the furnace,



Full many a mortal rise from rags and ruin
To ease and affluence and bonded greatness ;
Full many a mortal fall from splurge and splendor
To care and debt and seedy unimportance,
Ere on the tape the shrill recording "ticker"

Has scored ten times its fate-abounding figures.

Ah, Destiny ! grim ruler of the ages,

What boots it to resist thee ? Thou art mighty.

Stern and relentless as the flame and falchion,

Thou hurriest man, the puppet, to his sorrow,

E'en as a leaflet by the storm is hurried.

Ah, venturous mortal ! though the heavens be smiling,

And human plans prevail, trust not to seeming !

An hour will come — who can foretell its coming ? —

When Até's torch shall blaze in cruel lustre,

And Até's brazen sandal stamp in ashes

The fruit of man's endeavor. Lo ! approaches

With fawnlike tread that speaks the soul that gambols

Upon the turf, nor dreams of wolf or vulture,

Another innocent toward these shambles.

Tears fill these ancient eyes, and fain would whisper :

“ Begone, fair youth ! Who enters these pale portals

Must leave all hope behind him.” But I dare not,

For here I earn the bread that feeds my children,

Who, if I were shot out, would starve and perish.
One must be selfish in this world of salvage.

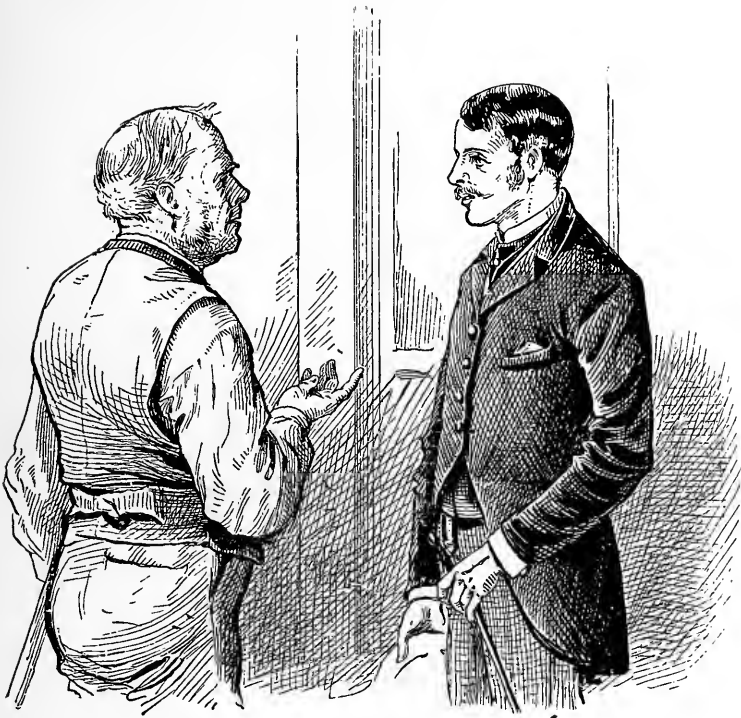
[*Enter PHIPPS, shyly.*]

CHORUS OF SHORN LAMBS.

Oh! mark the worthy man, whose cheeks are moist
With anguish for another. Yet hot tears
Avail not in the face of Heaven's decree.
Whate'er the gods have willed will come to pass,
Though Titans roar. Behold the gentle youth,
Who hither moves with velvet steps of fate,
Nor dreads the net the wily fowler spreads
For grass-green freshness. But we know, we know.

PHIPPS.

I prithee tell me, venerable man,
Whose silver locks proclaim thee one whom time



Has drawn and bent as hunters bend a bow,
If Briggs and Brown the brokers hang out here?

CULLY.

Ay, gentle youth, they do. Wouldst aught with them?

PHIPPS.

I fain would speak with either Briggs or Brown.

CHORUS OF BULLS.

I.

'Tis the time for a "flyer,"
The "shorts" have been fooled,
And stocks will go higher,



According to Gould ;
For the trunk lines have made an arrangement by
which all the freights will be pooled.

II.

A syndicate strong
Will bull " Wabash preferred "
Up to par before long,
We have secretly heard ;
And the worm falleth not to the late but the matutine
bird.

HOBBS (*advancing from inner office*).

Pray take a seat, sir. Upon yonder table
You'll find the latest news. 'T will not be long now
Ere Mr. Briggs returns. He's in the " board," sir.

PHIPPS.

How is the market ?



HOBBS.

Strong, sir ; strong as death
Through the entire list. Even the “fancies,”
That yesterday a little sagged and languished,
Like summer blooms that droop through lack of water,

Record a sharp advance. 'Tis said the chinch-bugs
Have perished in the rains, and all looks hopeful
Among the farmers for the coming grain crop.

CHORUS OF BULLS.

I.

For much higher prices
We're looking all round.
The Western advices
Read, "Chinch-bugs are drowned,"
And the fields where they formerly fattened with
promise of plenty are crowned.

II.

"Insiders" report
That "N. P." is the card,
And the "point," it is thought,
Cometh straight from Villard;

As the shaft from the bow of the hunter flies straight
to the heart of the pard.

CHORUS OF SHORN LAMBS.

STROPHE.

We once were as guileless and reckless as he.
To-day we are wiser ; but shaven are we
Of our wool.



God tempers the wind to some lambs that are shorn.
But alas for the lamb that is tossed by the horn
Of the bull !

We once were succulent as mountain kids ;
We once were full of blush and lush as he,
And dreamed of fortunes made as fast as peas
Fall from the pods when summer clothes the fields
And maidens sit beside the kitchen door
Pea-podding. But the end is far from this.
There is a law as grim and grave as death,
Which now we know, but then we did not know,
That whosoever buys, though boasted cheap
As dirt from ditches, the accursed thing
For which he hath not in his private purse
The power to pay, shall surely come to grief.
And he who sells, although the market soar
High as the kite which kisses the chaste sky,
The baleful property he does not own

With hopes to cover his defenceless "shorts"
Before the advent of the settling day
Shall surely lick the dust. And this is fate.
Yet, though we know the law, and though we know
That, from oblivion of the iron rule
Of the dread gods who thunder through the sky,
We all have lost, and, poor as maudlin mice
Who house in churches, scamper hard for bread,
There is a fatal charm which ties us down
With soft yet stable fetter to the spot
Where suffering struck us, and from day to day
We hang about the tantalizing tape
And pipe quotations in prophetic key,
And make brash boasts of what we fain would do
If we had money. And they let us stay, —
They who are masters of this sinful shop,
They who wring capital from others' sorrow
And batten upon grief; for well they know
The moth who sizzles in the candle's flare

Turns not his comrades from a garish doom ;
And sticky papers, spread for dog-day flies,
Fright not survivors by their piles of dead.

[*Enter* BRIGGS.]

ANTISTROPHE.

See hither approaching, with jubilant mien,



The fowler to gather this innocent green

In his net.

He's bullish to-day; he'll be bearish to-morrow,

As this woodcock will find to his infinite sorrow,

You may bet!

BRIGGS (*portly, suave, sonorous, prominent check suit and high standing collar with large points*).

What can I do for you, sir?

PHIPPS (*timidly*).

I should like

To ask what stock you think a prudent purchase.

BRIGGS.

I never give advice.

CHORUS OF SHORN LAMBS.

Ah! specious fairness!

He never gives advice! No, not for Joseph!

[Enter MIKE. He hands BRIGGS a telegram, and exit.]

BRIGGS (*reading*).

Advices from Amsterdam say that the Dutch are investing in "Denver."



Its earnings for April show more than eighty per centum of increase

Over those for the same month last year, and the mileage is not any greater.

SEMI-CHORUS OF BULLS.

The earnings of "Denver" are something immense.



There's no ground to suspect there's a "nig" in the fence.

We put every reliance on Palmer; he's one of the squarest of gents.

PHIPPS.

Do you not think that "Denver" has a future?

BRIGGS.

It shows great strength. I think it will go higher
Before it goes much lower. The Dutch are buying.
They are a prudent race, and ne'er slop over.

PHIPPS.

I think myself it is a first-rate buy.

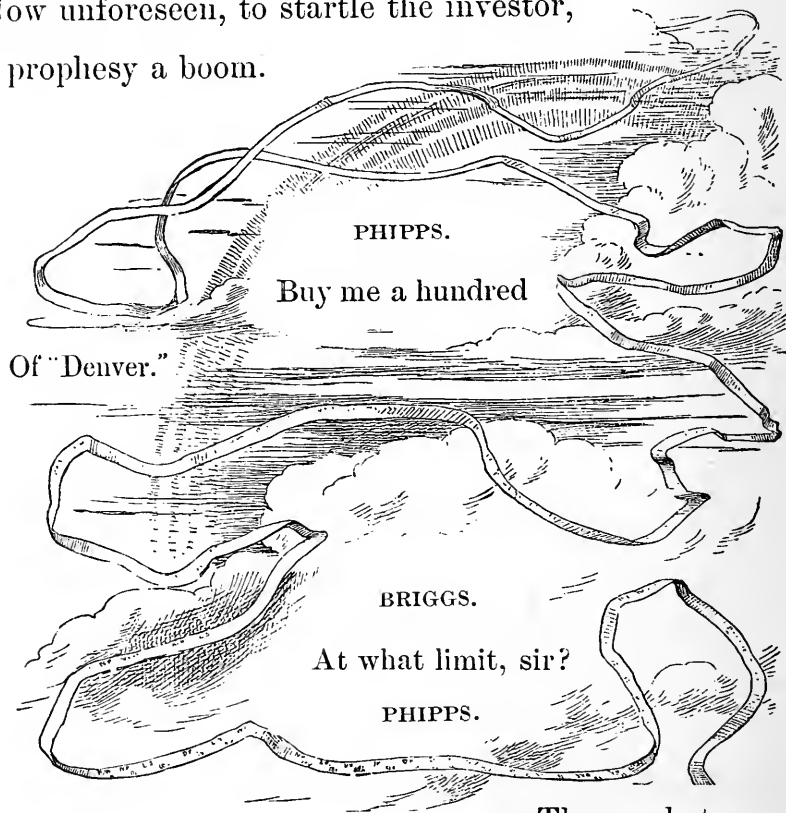
CHORUS OF SHORN LAMBS.

He thinks it is a buy! O sapient lamb!
He read it in the "Wall Street Truth" this morning.

BRIGGS.

I am a bull upon the present market
And see an undertone of strength. I look
For higher prices in the immediate future.
There is no fear, I think, of shipping gold.
The prospects for the crops are most assuring.

The statement of the banks allays suspicion.
And, if there comes not some untoward feature,
Now unforeseen, to startle the investor,
I prophesy a boom.



I may be "left" if I prescribe a limit.
He ne'er grows rich who is afraid to climb.

[BRIGGS *sends an order to buy 100 "Denver" at market to*
BROWN in the "Board."]

CHORUS OF SHORN LAMBS.

Thus is it ever.

We have been there ourselves.

The innocent lamb

Delighteth to clam

At highest of water,

And thinks himself clever

While going to slaughter.

We have been there ourselves.

[*Enter MIKE, with telegrams.*]

BRIGGS (*reading*).

Mr. Vanderbilt's brokers have orders to buy, at one
hundred and twenty,
Every share of "Lake Shore" that is offered. He
wishes to bolster the market

And strengthen the popular pulse, which of late has
been weak and capricious.

CHORUS OF BULLS.

I.

Mr. V. in "Lake Shore"
Has inserted a "peg,"
Which, sooner than draw,
He'd go short of a leg,
For he means to do well by the public; he's not such
a very bad egg.

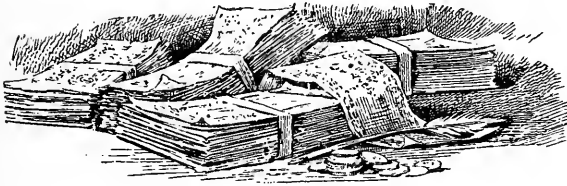
BRIGGS (*reading*).

We hear that Jay Gould has displayed to a party of
prominent magnates,
In order to prove that the rumors about him are
wholly unfounded,
The stocks in his safe, and the showing reveals him
surprisingly solvent.

CHORUS OF BULLS.

II.

Those taking a squint
At the state of Gould's stocks
Report there's a mint
Of strong stuff in his box ;



And it's meet that the market should stiffen when
the king-pin is rolling in rocks.

[*Enter messenger with report of purchase of "Denver."*]

BRIGGS.

We filled your order, but we had to climb.
We bought at seventy.

CHORUS OF BULLS.

It now is seventy-two.
O fortunate young man ! freeze onto it,
And you will reap a bigger profit yet.

PHIPPS.

I knew that "Denver" was a first-rate purchase.
It will go higher, and I mean to hold.

CHORUS OF SHORN LAMBS.

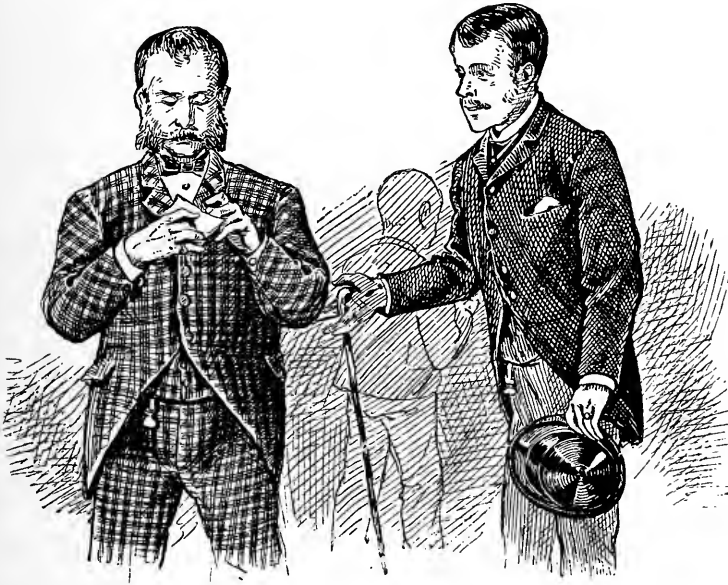
We have been there ourselves.
This lamb will, sure pop,
Hold on till the drop.
For to buy at the top
And sell out at hard pan
Is the favorite plan
Of the lamb.
We have been there ourselves.

PHIPPS.

Buy me two hundred "Lake Shore" at the market.

BRIGGS (*sends order*).

That "Denver" shows you quite a handsome profit.



PHIPPS.

I mean to hold ; it will go higher still.

BRIGGS.

I see no cause for selling at the moment.

PHIPPS.

Is "Louisville and Nashville" a sound property?

BRIGGS.

Parties who claim to know are bullish on it.

HOBBS (*enters*).

Your order, sir, is filled. Two hundred "Lake Shore"
We bought at twenty.

CHORUS OF BULLS.

And it now is higher.

It will touch twenty-three before the close.

PHIPPS.

Buy me a hundred "Louisville and Nashville."

The profit I have made upon this "Denver"
Will help me out in case of a reaction.

HOBBS (*to* BRIGGS).

The market, sir, is feverish, Mr. Brown thinks.

CHORUS OF SHORN LAMBS.

O luckless lamb!

The end is not far off. We understand
Thy fleece already by the butcher's hand
Is grasped, and soon the shears will make thee shorn.
Then wilt thou wish that thou hadst ne'er been born.
'The crafty gains that looked so well on paper
Are fading now from sight as fades the taper
At breath of flame, or as the ripened corn

Falls 'neath the scythe.

We grieve to see thee writhe
Between the bear's paw and the base bull's horn.

O luckless lamb!

CHORUS OF BEARS.

The market weakens. See how "Western Union"
Sags on free selling. Sorely sick is "Denver,"
On rumors a receiver 'll be appointed.



The Granger stocks are "off," and "Northwest"
staggers
E'en as an overloaded ship when Boreas bellows.

PHIPPS.

Do you advise me, sir, to sell my "Denver"?

[*Enter MIKE, with telegram.*]

BRIGGS.

We've bought one hundred "Louisville and Nashville"

For your account, at seventy-nine. The market
Looks very sick to me.

[*Going to ticker.*]

I see that "Denver"
Has no support. I think things will go lower
In the immediate future.

PHIPPS.

Do you think, sir,
It would be wise in me to sell my "Denver"?

[*Enter messenger, with telegram.*]

BRIGGS (*reading*).

We hear that insiders to-day have been sellers of
“Denver,”

And have plastered the market with stock at the
present high figures.

There is reason to think that the pool has unloaded
completely

Its block on the public. We deem it an excellent
short sale.

CHORUS OF BEARS.

I.

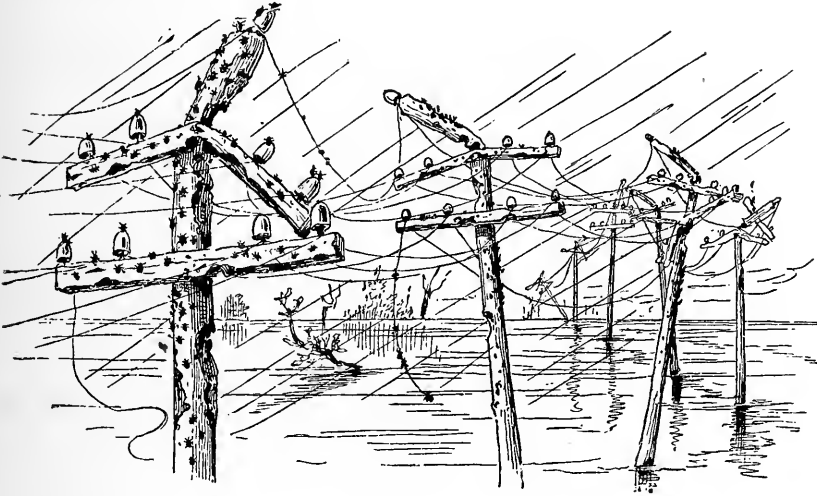
In “Denver” a break!

It is rotten as punk,

And the road-bed would make

A poor lot of old junk.

We've long had our eye upon Palmer; he's sly as a
pot-bellied monk.



BRIGGS (*reading*).

The latest reports from the West declare that the ter-
rible chinch-bugs
Have climbed up the telegraph poles to escape from
the violent rain-storms,
And are eating the tops of the poles, which makes
“Western Union” unsteady.

CHORUS OF BEARS.

II.

The steamer *Britannic*
Will carry more gold.
We look for a panic,
And freely have sold
The market on news that the wheat crop is certainly
nipped by the cold.

BRIGGS.

I've always said that "Denver" would sell lower.
Its management has caused me much suspicion.

PHIPPS.

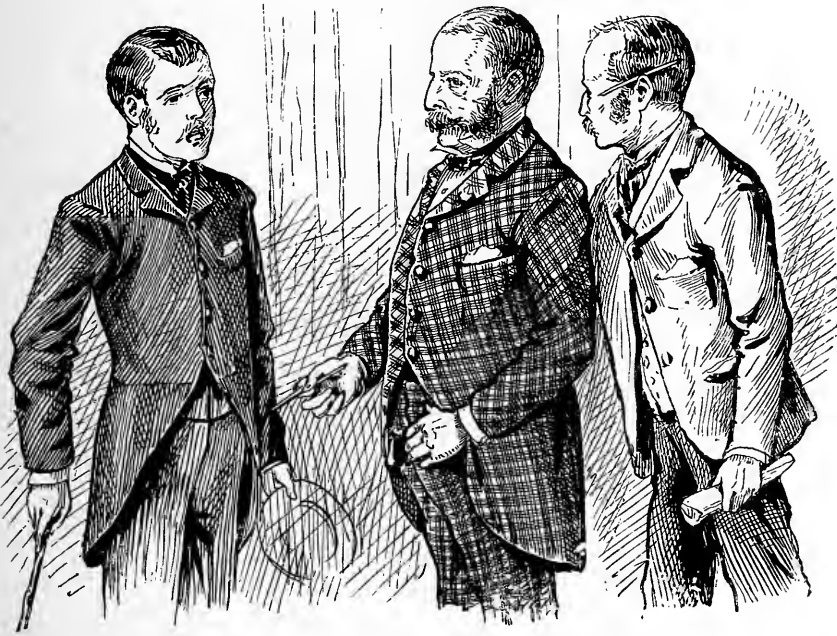
Do you anticipate a large decline?

BRIGGS.

I am a bear upon the situation.

[HOBBS enters and whispers to BRIGGS.]

We need more "margin," Mr. Phipps, for "Denver"
Has broken six points in the last few minutes.



PHIPPS.

I think it best to let my "Denver" go.
Don't you?

BRIGGS.

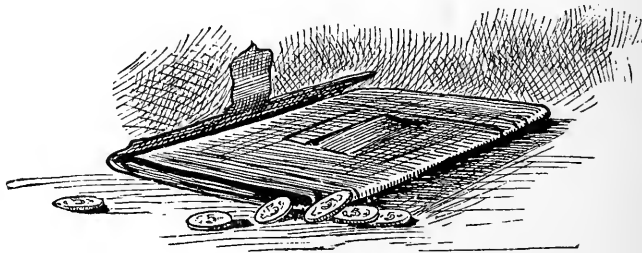
How does it stand you in at present ?

PHIPPS.

The last quotation is just three per cent
Below the price at which I bought.

BRIGGS.

You might
Give a stop order. That, you know, would limit
Your loss. I'm much annoyed to think you did n't



Salt down your profit. It is always best
To take a moderate profit.

PHIPPS.

To sixty-four, I order you to sell.
O wretched fool, to let my profit slide!

BRIGGS.

To get out at the top is only granted
The happy few. I think it will go lower
Before it goes much higher. The Dutch are selling.

[Enter MIKE, excitedly, with telegrams.]

MIKE.

The “peg,” sir, in “Lake Shore” ’s been taken out.

CHORUS OF BEARS.

The shrimps have got caught
Who went into "Lake Shore,"

Supposing they bought
On an utter ground floor.
If they think it is cheap at that figure, we 're ready to
give them some more.

[*Enter messenger.*]

BRIGGS.

We 've sold your "Denver," sir, at sixty-four.

PHIPPS.

I am well out of it. It will go lower.

BRIGGS.

To sell it "short" might make you whole again.

CHORUS OF SHORN LAMBS.

Within that argument much cunning lies.
A specious bait conceals the bitter hook.

[*Enter messenger.*]

BRIGGS.

The bottom 's dropping out of everything.

We need more "margin," Mr. Phipps, for "Lake
Shore"



Has broken open. If this racket lasts,
You 'll see a panic.

PHIPPS.

Then tip out my "Lake Shore."

BRIGGS.

What do you think of selling "Denver" short?

PHIPPS.

Should you consider it a prudent move?



BRIGGS.

I see no reason for stocks selling higher.

PHIPPS.

I'll go short of two hundred at the market.

[BRIGGS *sends orders.*]

CHORUS OF BEARS.

We hear that "L. N."

Is encumbered with debt.

There ne'er was a hen

That was able to set

On more eggs than her body would cover, without
some eggs rotting, you bet!

PHIPPS.

Is what they say of "Louisville and Nashville"

Authentic?

BRIGGS.

I have reason to believe so.
It has absorbed a host of other lines,
And is much watered. I should feel alarm
If I owned any at these fancy prices.

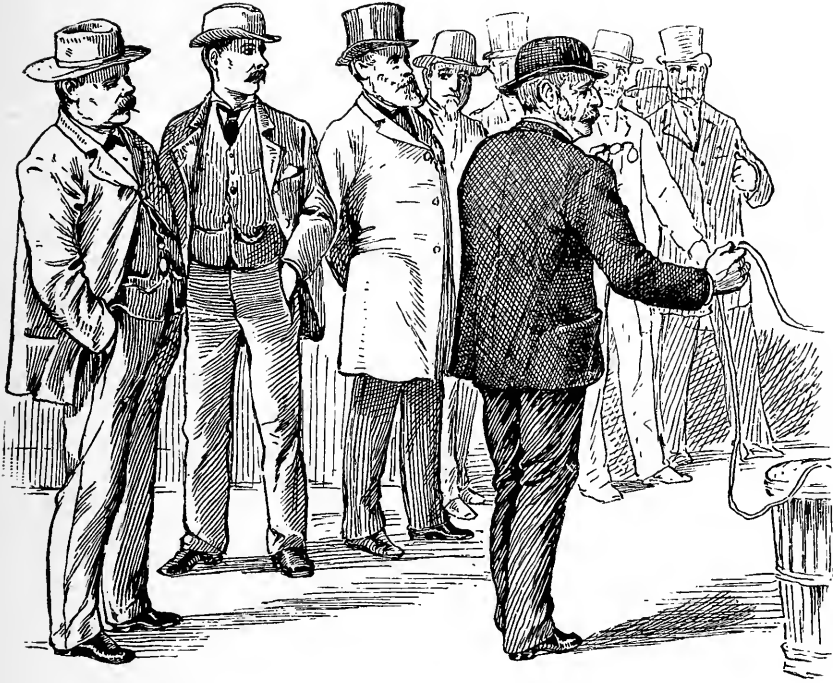
PHIPPS.

Tip out my "Louisville and Nashville," then,
And sell two hundred "Lake Shore" short. I fancy
I'll get it back at largely lower figures.

[BRIGGS *sends orders.*]

CHORUS OF SHORN LAMBS.

We have been there ourselves.
To sell what he's bought,
If he thinks himself caught
By the bears and go short,



When the market's hard pan
Is the favorite plan
Of the lamb.
We have been there ourselves.

[*Enter messenger.*]

BRIGGS.

We've sold your "Denver" short. We had to slaughter

Your "Lake Shore," as the best bid was eleven.

[HOBBS enters and whispers to BRIGGS.]



I think we're near the bottom. Mr. Brown
Sends word the market is a first-class buy.

SEMI-CHORUS OF BULLS.

The earnings of "Denver" are something immense.
There's no ground to suspect there's a "nig" in the
fence.

We put every reliance on Palmer; he's one of the
squarest of gents.

[*Enter MIKE, with telegrams.*]

BRIGGS (*reading*).

No gold will be shipped by the steamer *Britannic* to-
day, and the grain crop
Looks healthy, and only requires a little more rain to
make certain
A plentiful harvest. We think that all sound stocks
are cheap at these figures.

PHIPPS.

Perhaps it would be wise in me to cover.

CHORUS OF BULLS.

The market's whooping. "Denver" has advanced
Two points. The boastful bears will have to climb.



PHIPPS.

Do you advise me to take back my "Denver"
And "Lake Shore"?

BRIGGS.

I'm a bull upon this market.
I see an undertone of strength. I look
For higher prices in the immediate future.

[*Enter messenger.*]

The late advices say the Dutch are buying,
And Gould has told his friends that "Western Union"
Is good for par.

PHIPPS.

Then I prefer to cover
And stand the loss.

BRIGGS.

You'll just have time, I think,
Before the market closes. Hurry, Mike,
And fill these orders. Lively now! Look sharp!

[*Exit messenger.*]

PHIPPS.

'T is a cold day for me. This loss, I fear,
Will wipe me out.



BRIGGS.

'T is never wise to sell
The market short upon a large decline.



CHORUS OF BULLS.

For much higher prices

We're looking all round.

The Western advices

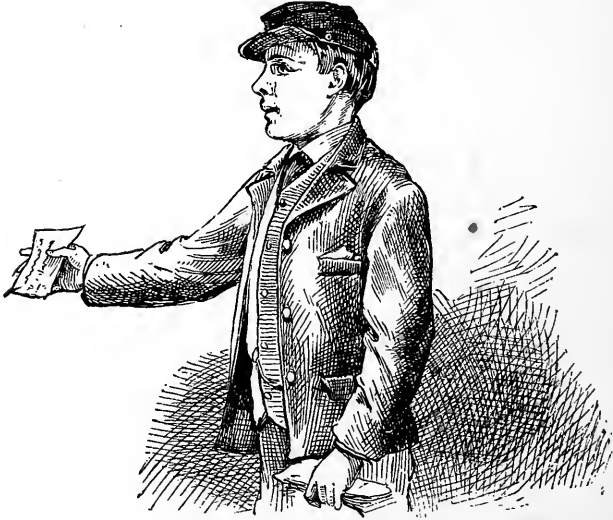
Read, "Chinch-bugs are drowned,"

And the fields where they formerly fattened with
promise of plenty are crowned.

CHORUS OF BEARS.

The steamer *Britannic*
Will carry more gold.
We look for a panic,
And freely have sold
The market on news that the wheat crop is certainly
nipped by the cold.

[*Enter MIKE, with telegrams.*]



BRIGGS.

We filled your orders, but we had to climb.

We covered all your shorts,—“Denver” at sixty-seven,

And “Lake Shore” at thirteen.

HOBBS (*coming from ticker*).

The market sags

And closes weak.

[*The ticker stops.*]

PHIPPS.

Please make up my account.

I am cleaned out; no “margin” have I left

With which to venture further. I am dry

As summer brook beneath an August sun.

Thus, as we live, we learn. The hoarded gains

Of three long years of toil are swept away

E’en in a breath. Such is the fate of him

Who seeks to climb to fortune by short cuts.

[HOBBS presents him with his account.]



Three thousand out of pocket! Ah, Ffine!
How shall I wed thee now? Oh, hapless hour
When first I shadowed this seducing shop!

[As, overcome with distress, he peruses the account, the Choruses of Bulls and Bears pass off the stage, repeating their last stanzas. The market is closed.]

BRIGGS (*putting on his overcoat*).

The market has closed weak. I rather think
We shall see lower prices still to-morrow ;
But yet there is an undertone of strength
That may at any time develop into
A buying movement. Well I 'm off. Good night !

[*Exit* BRIGGS.]



CULLY (*advancing with broom*).

The day declines. A silvern silence soon
Will hold these halls until to-morrow's sun
Awakes once more the "ticker's" tedious tune,
And, swathed in sleep, will weary mortals rest.
Who shall escape his fate? Fate never sleeps,
But ever stalks abroad, with Argus eyes,
And weaves the woof beneath the twinkling stars
As surely as at noon. Alas, poor lamb!
So falls the curse upon the head of him
Who seeks to garner wealth by ways the gods
Have interdicted to the race of man.
Naught in this world is stable, save the fruit
Of honest industry. The sweat of brows
Is sweeter than the gambler's ardent breath.
Who delves in ditches sleeps secure at night
Upon a falling market, and, though poor,
Laughs in the face of destiny; but what
Shall salve the spirit of the wretch who trades

On "margins" ? Yet time flies. I must to work.
Who grieves too much for others suffers loss.



[PHIPPS sinks into a chair, and covers his face with his hands.]

CHORUS OF SHORN LAMBS.

I.

The gods who in heaven abide,
And preside o'er the planet of man,

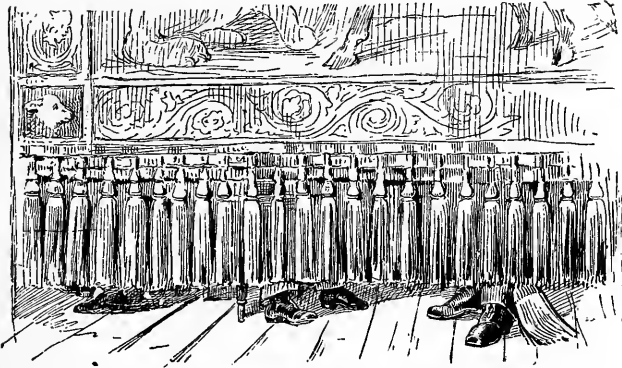
To stimulate laudable pride
In his heart, since time began,
For mortals a law have cast,
As the pitcher is cast for the ewer,
That the slow alone shall last,
The gradual only endure ;
And that wealth which grows in a night
In a night shall fade away,
As the morning mists take flight
At a glance of the eye of day.

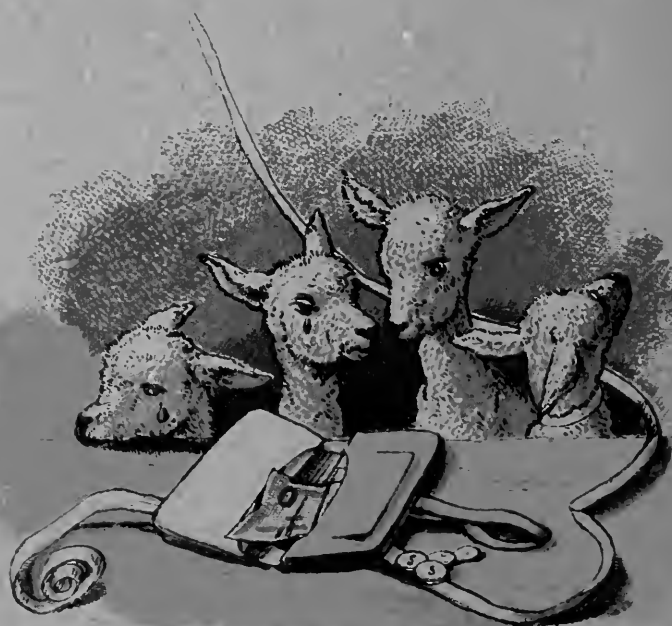
II.

Success is labor's prize,
Work is the mother of Fame,
And who on a "boom" shall rise
To the height of an honest name ?
The bee by industry reapeth
The stores which enrich the hives ;
All that is thrifty creepeth,

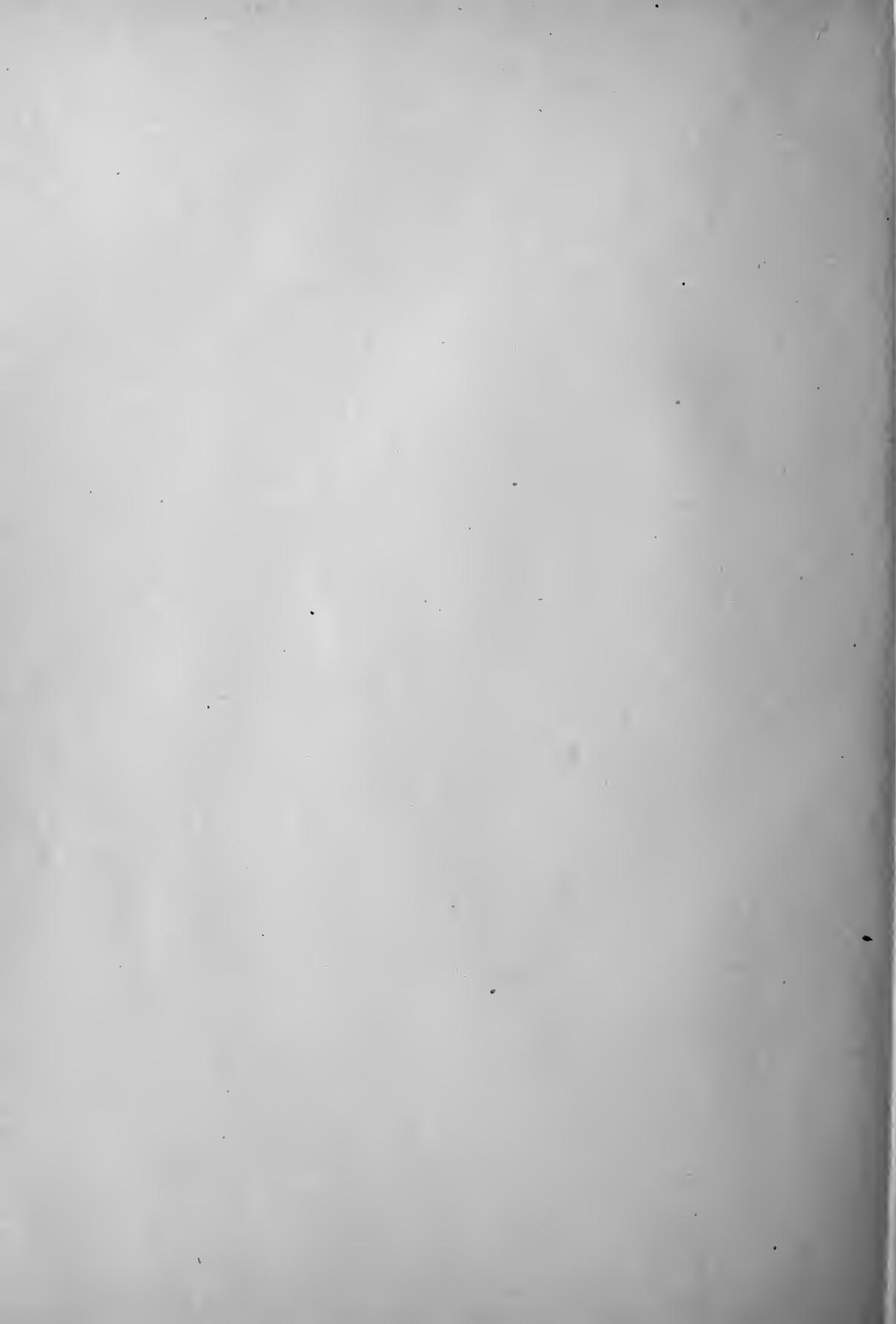
For toil is the law of lives.
And he who reaps without sowing
A bitter harvest reaps.
The law of gradual growing
Is a law that never sleeps.

[*Curtain.*]











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